

CARIBBEAN FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Draft 2022-2026 Strategic Plan

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ACRONYMS

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| CFMC | Caribbean Fishery Management Council |
| CRFM | Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism |
| DAP | District Advisory Panel |
| DPNR | Department of Planning and Natural Resources (U.S. Virgin Islands) |
| DRNA | Departamento de Recursos Naturales y Ambientales (Puerto Rico) |
| EBFM | Ecosystem Based Fishery Management |
| EEZ | Exclusive Economic Zone |
| EFH | Essential Fish Habitat |
| FAD | Fish Aggregating Device |
| FEP | Fishery Ecosystem Plan |
| IBFMP | Island-Based Fishery Management Plan |
| MREP | Marine Resource Education Program |
| MSA | Magnuson Stevens Act |
| NOAA | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| NPS | National Park Service |
| OEAP | Outreach and Education Advisory Panel |
| OLE | Office of Law Enforcement |
| PEPCO | Programa de Educación para Pescadores Comerciales (Educational Program for Commercial Fishers) |
| SEFSC | Southeast Fisheries Science Center |
| SSC | Scientific and Statistical Committee |
| USCG | U.S. Coast Guard |
| USFWS | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| USVI | U.S. Virgin Islands |
| WECAFC | Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission |

INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council (Caribbean Council, or CFMC) is responsible for the conservation and management of fishery resources within the federal jurisdiction of the U.S. Caribbean, which includes Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Caribbean Council is one of eight regional councils established in 1976 by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act, later renamed the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA).

In addition to the councils, the MSA also created the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), an area that extends from the seaward boundary of coastal states and territories out to 200 nautical miles. The MSA established sovereign authority over most fishery resources in the EEZ, a responsibility that is shared between the U.S. Secretary of Commerce and the regional councils. The Caribbean Council recommends management measures for fishery resources within its jurisdiction through the development of fishery management plans, which must be reviewed and approved by the Secretary of Commerce before being implemented by NOAA Fisheries. All Council recommendations are developed in an open, public process and must be consistent with the ten national standards contained in the MSA.

The Caribbean Council is comprised of seven voting members. This includes four public voting members appointed by the Secretary with knowledge of commercial fishing, recreational fishing, or conservation of marine resources of the U.S. Caribbean. The remaining three voting members include the principal officials with marine fishery management responsibility for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the Territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands (or their designees), and the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Administrator. The Council also has three non-voting members representing the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Secretary of State.

Development of measures to maintain healthy fishery resources that meet the needs of fishers and the general public is an inclusive process. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) reviews biological, statistical, social, and economic information and provides expert technical advice to ensure that Council decisions are based on the best scientific information available. Additionally, the Council has advisory panels to assist it in establishing fishery management goals and objectives, as well as outreach and education approaches, and to provide input on cultural values and economic needs of island fishing communities. Each advisory panel contains a balanced representation of fishery and stakeholder interests and serves an important communication role for those affected by the Council's decisions.

The Caribbean Council recently evaluated its management framework and is transitioning from a species-specific approach to one that is focused on the unique characteristics of the fishery resources and fishing communities of each of its three island districts (Puerto Rico, St. Thomas/St. John, St. Croix). This new framework is detailed in the Council's recently approved Island-Based Fishery Management Plans (IBFMPs). Additionally, the Council is developing a Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) that will guide implementation of its new management framework using an ecosystem-based approach. This strategic plan establishes goals and objectives for these critically important efforts and serves as a roadmap for future activities that will promote effective implementation, as well as transparency and accountability for the Council's stakeholders.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The organization of the strategic plan reflects both the collective goals and distinctive needs of the three island districts that comprise the Council's jurisdiction. The Vision, Mission, and Core Values incorporate a common future, purpose, and approach. The Goal Statements reflect broad areas of focus necessary to achieve the Council's Vision while accommodating the differing priorities of each island district. All were developed with extensive Council, advisory panel, and stakeholder input.

For three of the goals (Management; Ecosystem and Resource Health; Social, Cultural, and Economic Issues), island-specific objectives and strategies were developed to address the characteristics and needs of each district. Several objectives evolved to be identical across island districts, indicating overlapping priorities. In such instances, objectives have been consolidated so that only the island-specific strategies are represented. The Council also determined that the Communication and Outreach goal encompasses one of its most important responsibilities and concluded the objectives and strategies were relevant throughout its jurisdiction, and not specific to one island or district.

VISION

Thriving and resilient island ecosystems, fisheries, and fishing communities that provide cultural, social, and economic benefits for all.

MISSION

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council conserves, restores and manages fishery resources in the U.S. Caribbean consistent with the requirements of the Magnuson Stevens Act. The Council is committed to advancing the collaborative stewardship of these fisheries and supporting island ecosystems through education, outreach, and stakeholder input.

CORE VALUES

The following core values guide all Council decisions:

- Stewardship
- Collaboration
- Integrity
- Transparency
- Fairness
- Respect

GOAL STATEMENTS

MANAGEMENT

Advance management approaches that promote healthy local fisheries and ecosystems, consider the needs of island fishing communities, and foster collaboration among management partners.

ECOSYSTEM AND RESOURCE HEALTH

Promote sustainable utilization of local marine resources in a manner that maintains local ecological structure and function and provides for resilient fishery resources.

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES

Ensure that management decisions consider the unique characteristics and needs of island fishing communities while promoting fair and equitable resource use.

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

Engage, educate, and inform a variety of audiences to improve public understanding and participation in the Council process.

MANAGEMENT

Goal: Advance management approaches that promote healthy local fisheries and ecosystems, consider the needs of island fishing communities, and foster collaboration among management partners.

CROSS-DISTRICT OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Support the development and implementation of accurate, timely, and cost-effective data collection, reporting, and monitoring programs.

PUERTO RICO STRATEGIES

- Improve fishery-independent data through partnerships.
- Prioritize data collection for species subject to seasonal and area closures.
- Expand education and outreach on commercial electronic reporting technology.
- Continue participation in re-initiation of the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) in Puerto Rico.
- Support Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) and Departamento de Recursos Naturales y Ambientales (DRNA) improvements to commercial sampling.
- Support the SEFSC fishery-independent deep-water snapper-grouper survey.
- Support local government efforts to increase port sampling and port agents.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN STRATEGIES

- Support NOAA Fisheries and U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) efforts to improve recreational reporting and establish an MRIP survey in St. Thomas/St. John.
- Support SEFSC efforts to work with DPNR to design and implement a multi-mode catch sampling program.
- Prioritize data collection for species subject to seasonal and area closures.
- Support USVI DPNR efforts to examine licensing modifications and improvements.

ST. CROIX STRATEGIES

- Support NOAA Fisheries and USVI DPNR efforts to improve recreational reporting, port sampling, and review previous pilot efforts to establish an MRIP-certified survey in St. Croix as per the MRIP regional implementation plan.
- Support efforts by USVI DPNR to review and modify licensing requirements to improve catch reporting.
- Support SEFSC efforts to work with USVI DPNR to design and implement a multi-mode catch sampling program.
- Collaborate with USVI DPNR on education and outreach regarding accurate catch reporting.
- Prioritize data collection for species subject to seasonal and area closures.
- Support USVI DPNR efforts to modernize and improve the licensing system.

Objective 2: Promote fisher involvement and other collaborative research approaches to meeting island-specific science and information needs.

PUERTO RICO STRATEGIES

- Develop and prioritize a list of Puerto Rico-specific research needs.
- Work with science and research partners and with fishers to prioritize stock assessments for species subject to seasonal and area closures.
- Collaborate with Sea Grant to ensure Puerto Rico-specific research needs are included in grant opportunities.
- Incorporate fisher observations into stock assessments.
- Develop a list of Puerto Rico science and data needs that could be addressed using commercial and recreational fisher involvement.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN STRATEGIES

- Collaborate with science partners and fishers to develop and prioritize a St. Thomas/St. John-specific list of research needs.
- Prioritize and involve fishers in urgently needed stock assessments for species subject to seasonal and area closures.
- Encourage collaborative studies on the effectiveness of Grammanik Bank and other closed areas.
- Work with the SEFSC to identify key species for which fishers could assist in obtaining biological samples.
- Support joint SEFSC, USVI DPNR, and National Park Service (NPS) efforts to improve information for data-limited stock assessments (e.g., gear selectivity studies in St. Thomas/St. John etc.).
- Develop educational materials to promote fisher understanding of science and information needs.

ST. CROIX STRATEGIES

- Support joint SEFSC, USVI DPNR, and NPS gear selectivity studies in St. Croix.
- Identify opportunities for fishers to contribute to biological samples for parrotfish and other species.
- Support research by academic science partners to improve data-limited species assessments.
- Collaborate with science partners and fishers to develop and prioritize a St. Croix-specific list of research needs.
- Ensure that closed areas are correctly marked by buoys (e.g., Buck Island).
- Develop educational materials to promote fisher understanding of science and information needs.

Objective 3: Ensure that management measures encourage regulatory compliance and foster effective enforcement.

PUERTO RICO STRATEGIES

- Review enforceability of existing Puerto Rico management measures.
- Work with Puerto Rico DRNA to foster regulatory consistency.
- Work with Puerto Rico DRNA, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and local marine enforcement agencies to support cross-training of personnel.

- Collaborate with management partners to develop commercial and recreational compliance guides for Puerto Rico.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN STRATEGIES

- Coordinate with NOAA OLE, USVI DPNR and USCG to review enforceability of existing regulations.
- Support cross-training of enforcement personnel and joint enforcement efforts through memoranda of understanding.
- Identify enforcement gaps in existing St. Thomas/St. John regulations.
- Promote development of clear, understandable compliance guides for commercial and recreational stakeholders.

ST. CROIX STRATEGIES

- Coordinate with NOAA OLE, USVI DPNR, and the USCG to review consistency of existing regulations for federally managed species.
- Support cross-training of enforcement personnel.
- Identify enforcement gaps for existing St. Croix regulations.
- Review regulations for effectiveness and/or redundancy.
- Develop clear, understandable compliance guides for commercial and recreational fishers and other stakeholders.
- Ensure that educational materials are available for decision-makers (e.g., legislators) as needed.

Objective 4: Collaborate with domestic and international partners to promote adaptive and efficient management that considers diverse community interests.

PUERTO RICO STRATEGIES

- Regularly review effectiveness of existing management measures (e.g., spawning areas and closures).
- Work with partners to develop clearly stated objectives for management actions.
- Address impacts of bycatch on ecosystem relationships.
- Participate in Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission (WECAFC) queen conch workgroup.
- Evaluate new and existing management measures for consistency with local ecosystem productivity using Ecosystem Status Reports.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN STRATEGIES

- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of existing seasonal and area closures as soon as possible.
- Reduce bycatch and waste through gear modifications and seasonal restrictions.
- Collaborate with USVI DPNR to develop consistent management measures where appropriate.
- Ensure management measures accommodate St. Thomas/St. John local ecosystem productivity.
- Participate in international forums such as WECAFC and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) efforts to improve understanding and management of Caribbean-wide resources.

ST. CROIX STRATEGIES

- Work with NOAA Fisheries and USVI DPNR to reduce bycatch through gear and seasonal modifications.
- Work with USVI DPNR and NOAA OLE to develop consistent regulations where appropriate.
- Ensure management measures accommodate St. Croix local ecosystem productivity.
- Involve both the St. Croix District Advisory Panel (DAP) and Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC) in review and development of management measures to evaluate commercial and recreational community impacts.
- Ensure that management measures consider and/or address the potential impacts of climate change.
- Ensure that management approaches consider the impacts of invasive species.
- Explore underutilized species as a means to reduce pressure on currently fully utilized species.
- Support the development of interagency coordination for permitting of Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) deployment.

Objective 5: Consider the potential impacts of climate change on the efficacy of management measures.

PUERTO RICO STRATEGIES

- Use Puerto Rico Ecosystem Status Reports to inform development of management measures.
- Evaluate fishery-independent information for climate-related impacts and trends.
- Solicit fisher input regarding climate-related changes in species and habitats.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN STRATEGIES

- Use USVI (St. Thomas/St. John) Ecosystem Status Reports to inform development of management measures.
- Evaluate fishery-independent information for climate-related impacts and trends.
- Solicit fisher input regarding climate-related changes in species and habitats.

ST. CROIX STRATEGIES

- Use USVI (St. Croix) Ecosystem Status Reports to inform development of management measures.
- Evaluate fishery-independent information for climate-related impacts and trends.
- Solicit fisher input regarding climate-related changes in species and habitats

ECOSYSTEM AND RESOURCE HEALTH

Goal: Promote sustainable utilization of local marine resources in a manner that maintains local ecological structure and function and provides for resilient fishery resources.

CROSS-DISTRICT OBJECTIVES

Objective 6: Implement the Fishery Ecosystem Plan as a roadmap for future Council actions to maintain the ecological relationships, roles, and services of the Puerto Rico, St. Thomas/St. John, and St. Croix island ecosystems.

PUERTO RICO STRATEGIES

- Evaluate existing spawning season closures and closed areas (e.g., Bajo de Sico, Tourmaline Bank, Abrir la Sierra) to determine contributions to ecosystem integrity.
- Establish a schedule to regularly evaluate and monitor closed seasons and areas.
- Collaborate with science partners and stakeholders to improve local ecosystem information.
- Establish a process to incorporate ecosystem information and approaches into management measures specific to Puerto Rico.
- Identify enforcement concerns that may impact ecological relationships.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN STRATEGIES

- Collaborate with science partners and stakeholders to identify gaps and improve local biological and ecosystem information for St. Thomas/St. John.
- Evaluate existing spawning season closures and closed areas (e.g., Grammanik Bank, Hind Bank) to determine contributions to ecosystem integrity.
- Establish a process to incorporate ecosystem information and approaches into management measures for St. Thomas/St. John.
- Consider ecosystem approaches that are responsive to climate change.

ST. CROIX STRATEGIES

- Collaborate with science partners and stakeholders (e.g., other nongovernmental organizations, The Nature Conservancy, Caribbean Oceanic Restoration & Education Foundation, commercial/recreational fishers) to identify gaps and prioritize ecological data needs to improve local biological and ecosystem information for St. Croix.
- Evaluate existing spawning season closures and closed areas (e.g., mutton snapper, Lang Bank) to determine contributions to ecosystem integrity.
- Establish a process to incorporate ecosystem information and approaches into management measures for St. Croix.
- Ensure that ecosystem-based management approaches are responsive to climate change.
- Explore use of underutilized and underdeveloped species and resources to reduce pressure and maintain ecological relationships.

Objective 7: Identify, manage, and protect coral reef and other fishery resource habitats of Puerto Rico, St. Thomas/St. John, and St. Croix.

PUERTO RICO STRATEGIES

- Develop Council habitat policies that address impacts to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) from coastal development, erosion and sedimentation, and other forms of pollution.
- Develop outreach materials on the impacts of habitat loss from non-fishing activities (e.g., erosion/sedimentation) and communicate and collaborate with agencies responsible for managing these activities.
- Support SEFSC mapping efforts and collaborate with science partners to identify Puerto Rico habitat mapping needs.
- Work with management partners to establish clear goals for five-year EFH reviews.
- Ensure that EFH designations account for ecological roles and relationships of species.
- Support projects that rehabilitate fishery habitats to offset habitat loss or damage.
- Collaborate with scientists and fishers to assess the impact of certain fishing gears on fishery habitats.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN STRATEGIES

- Develop Council habitat policies that address impacts to EFH from coastal development, erosion/sedimentation, and other forms of pollution that impact St. Thomas/St. John habitats
- Develop outreach materials on impacts of habitat loss from non-fishing impacts.
- Work with management partners to establish clear goals for 5-year EFH reviews.
- Ensure that EFH designations account for ecological roles and relationships of species.
- Utilize the Council's EFH comment authority to address federally permitted projects that may impact ecologically sensitive habitats.

ST. CROIX

- Develop Council habitat policies that address impacts to EFH from coastal development, erosion and sedimentation, and other forms of pollution that impact St. Croix habitats.
- Support modifications to territorial coastal zone regulations that reduce sedimentation and erosion.
- Work with management partners to establish clear goals for five-year EFH reviews.
- Ensure that EFH designations account for ecological roles and relationships of species.
- Use the Council's EFH comment authority to address federally permitted projects that may impact ecologically sensitive habitats.
- Ensure that juvenile habitats are sufficiently protected.
- Promote the regular review of marine managed areas (e.g., East End Marine Park).
- Promote a boating infrastructure plan.
- Promote single point moorings both inshore and offshore to protect EFH.

Objective 8: Collaborate with management partners to address enforcement concerns that may affect ecological relationships.

PUERTO RICO STRATEGIES

- Conduct outreach with NOAA OLE and Puerto Rico DRNA enforcement personnel regarding impacts of illegal fishing activities on fishery resources and habitats.
- Conduct outreach to Puerto Rico agencies on the impacts of non-fishing activities and development on ecosystem structure and function.
- Conduct outreach with the fishing community to communicate the impacts of illegal fishing on the health of the resource.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN STRATEGIES

- Conduct outreach with NOAA OLE and USVI DPNR enforcement personnel regarding impacts of illegal fishing activities on fishery resources and habitats.
- Conduct outreach to permitting agencies on impacts of non-fishing activities and development on ecosystem structure and function.

ST. CROIX STRATEGIES

- Conduct outreach with NOAA OLE and USVI DPNR enforcement personnel regarding ecological impacts of illegal fishing activities.
- Conduct outreach to permitting agencies on potential impacts of non-fishing activities and development on ecosystem structure and function.
- Conduct outreach with the fishing community to communicate the impacts of illegal fishing on the health of the resource.

PUERTO RICO OBJECTIVES

Objective 9: Collaborate with management partners to address the impacts of natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes, earthquakes, Sargassum blooms) on ecosystem structure and function.

- Determine data needed to evaluate impacts of natural disasters on species and habitats.
- Incorporate effects of natural disasters into the development of Ecosystem Status Reports.
- Evaluate the flexibility of existing management approaches to respond to local ecosystem impacts from hurricanes and earthquakes.
- Establish a process to collect fisher observations on local impacts of natural disasters.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN OBJECTIVES

Objective 10: Encourage efforts to create and rehabilitate fishery resource habitats that support ecosystem structure and function.

- Work with federal and territorial management partners and stakeholders to identify opportunities for habitat enhancement.
- Explore opportunities for funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), NOAA's Marine Debris Removal Program, and other federal agencies to use certain types of marine debris for habitat creation.
- Identify habitat restoration needs for NOAA's Office of Habitat Conservation grant programs.

Objective 11: Collaborate with science partners to identify and address ecological data and information gaps.

- Explore existing datasets to fill information gaps.
- Communicate St. Thomas/St. John ecosystem information needs to academic partners.
- Collaborate with science partners to prioritize ecological data needs, consistent with NOAA's Caribbean Regional Ecosystem Based Fishery Management (EBFM) Implementation Plan.

ST. CROIX OBJECTIVES

Objective 12: Encourage efforts to rehabilitate and/or create fishery resource habitats that support ecosystem structure and function.

- Work with federal and territorial management partners and others to identify opportunities for habitat enhancement and restoration.
- Explore opportunities to address the impacts of invasive species on St. Croix fishery habitats.
- Investigate the potential of FADs to mitigate habitat losses and deploy FADs where appropriate.
- Identify habitat restoration needs for NOAA's Office of Habitat Conservation grant programs.

Objective 13: Collaborate with management partners to ensure that ecosystem approaches are responsive to climate change, environmental changes, and natural disasters.

- Evaluate flexibility of current management approaches to climate change impacts.
- Work with the broader Caribbean community to identify potential impacts to habitats and species distributions from climate change.

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES

Goal: Ensure that management decisions consider the unique characteristics and needs of island fishing communities while promoting fair and equitable resource use.

CROSS-DISTRICT OBJECTIVES

Objective 14: Promote the collection and dissemination of social and economic data that informs management decisions.

PUERTO RICO STRATEGIES

- Engage science partners, fishers, consumers, wholesalers/distributors, and the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) to identify and prioritize social and economic data gaps and research priorities for Puerto Rico.
- Work with Sea Grant to ensure social and economic research priorities are incorporated into funding opportunities.
- Use results from existing and completed studies (e.g., Hurricane Maria & COVID-19 assessments, Marine Fisheries Initiative (MARFIN) project) to inform future decisions.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN STRATEGIES

- Engage science partners and the SSC to identify and prioritize social and economic data gaps and research priorities for St. Thomas/St. John.
- Work with Sea Grant to ensure social and economic research priorities are incorporated into funding opportunities.
- Identify and use results from existing and completed socioeconomic impact studies (e.g., Hurricanes Irma/Maria, COVID assessments).

ST. CROIX

- Engage science partners (SEFSC, academic researchers, Sea Grant, etc.) and the SSC to identify and prioritize social and economic data gaps and research priorities for St. Croix.
- Work with Sea Grant to ensure social and economic research priorities are incorporated into funding opportunities.
- Identify and use results from existing and completed studies (e.g., Hurricanes Irma/Maria, COVID assessments).
- Ensure that new or existing social and economic science studies collaborate and coordinate with USVI DPNR.

Objective 15: Evaluate the social, cultural, and economic impacts of management decisions and actions across user groups.

PUERTO RICO STRATEGIES

- Review and document the social and economic impacts of existing Puerto Rico closed seasons and spawning areas on commercial, for-hire, and recreational stakeholders.

- Ensure that management measures address cultural differences across Puerto Rico's fishing communities.
- Use online tools and social media to incorporate fisher and other stakeholder observations and experiences.
- Assess recreational fishing opportunity and satisfaction across Puerto Rico communities.
- Consider the contributions of fishers with respect to stewardship of the resource and ecosystem in the development and evaluation of management decisions.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN STRATEGIES

- Review and document the social and economic impacts of existing St. Thomas/St. John closed seasons and spawning areas on commercial, for-hire, and recreational stakeholders (e.g., Grammanik Bank).
- Ensure that management measures acknowledge and address differences across the fishing communities of St. Thomas/St. John.

ST. CROIX STRATEGIES

- Review and document the social and economic impacts of existing St. Croix closed seasons and spawning areas on commercial, for-hire, and recreational stakeholders (e.g., Lang Bank).
- Ensure that management approaches provide equitable access for commercial and recreational resource users.
- Work with stakeholders to identify and address commercial and recreational user conflicts.
- Assess the social and economic impacts of the Buck Island Reef National Monument expansion on recreational and commercial fishers.

Objective 16: Promote efforts that support social and economic opportunity and stability across sectors and fishing communities.

PUERTO RICO STRATEGIES

- Support community efforts to improve fishing infrastructure across Puerto Rico.
- Support and promote development of a recruitment and training program for young fishers that encourages legal entry into the fishery.
- Consider management approaches that address recreational fishing opportunity and satisfaction.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN STRATEGIES

- Support community efforts to improve fishing infrastructure across STT and STJ, including landing and market sites.
- Develop education and outreach materials to support the use of social media and other virtual approaches to marketing locally caught species.
- Consider management approaches that address recreational fishing opportunity and satisfaction.

ST. CROIX STRATEGIES

- Support community efforts to improve fishing infrastructure across St. Croix, including landing and market sites.

- Develop education and outreach materials to support the use of social media and other virtual approaches to marketing locally caught species.
- Consider management approaches that address recreational fishing opportunity and satisfaction.

PUERTO RICO OBJECTIVES

Objective 17: Consider the impacts of enforcement and illegal fishing in Puerto Rico on economic opportunity and social well-being.

- Collaborate with science partners to document the economic impact of illegal and unlicensed sales of fish in Puerto Rico.
- Work with management partners to determine where additional enforcement could improve economic conditions and/or trust among user groups.

ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN OBJECTIVES

Objective 18: Consider the impacts of enforcement and illegal fishing in St. Thomas and St. John on economic opportunity and social well-being.

- Collaborate with science partners to document the economic impact of illegal and unlicensed sales of fish in St. Thomas/St. John.
- Work with management partners to determine where additional enforcement could improve economic conditions and/or trust among user groups.

ST. CROIX OBJECTIVES

Objective 19: Consider the impacts of non-regulation, enforcement, and illegal fishing in St. Croix on economic opportunity and social well-being.

- Collaborate with science partners to document the economic impact of illegal and unlicensed sales of fish in St. Croix.
- Work with management partners to determine where additional enforcement could improve economic conditions and/or trust among commercial and recreational user groups.
- Educate hoteliers and restaurateurs on the importance of purchasing fish from licensed commercial fishers.

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

Goal: Engage, educate, and inform a variety of audiences to improve public understanding and participation in the Council process.

Objective 20: Use a variety of communication tools that consider the social, cultural, and economic characteristics of target audiences in coordination with the Outreach and Education Advisory Panel (OEAP).

- Continue use of the Council's social media platforms and explore online and app-based technologies (e.g., WhatsApp, email templates) to convey information and updates.
- Develop a catalogue of communities, markets, businesses, and individuals with preferences and need for traditional media tools.
- Maintain the content and organization of the Council's website to enhance its utility to a variety of users.
- Ensure that communication and outreach materials account for stakeholder language preferences.
- Coordinate with management partners, commercial and recreational fishing organizations and fishers, nongovernmental organizations, and coastal businesses to expand the scope of Council communications across new and existing audiences.
- Consider sector-specific and "boat-friendly" communication materials.

Objective 21: Promote participation of a variety of stakeholders in the Council process.

- Increase the frequency of Council communications in advance of meetings or events.
- Use a variety of traditional, online, and social media tools to advertise and remind stakeholders of Council meetings and events.
- Expand the use of webinars and conference lines to provide opportunities for remote access, participation, and education.
- Ensure that meetings and events are scheduled to encourage maximum participation.
- Consider development of issue-specific online comment forms to expand opportunities for public input.
- Conduct issue-specific workshops to promote collaborative development of management approaches.
- Develop a newsletter or summary to highlight Council meeting outcomes and anticipated actions.
- Expand and improve participation by experienced and young fishers in the Council process through the development and support of territorial outreach programs in the USVI.
- Attract other stakeholders, in addition to fishers, into the Council process to improve decision-making for the benefit of fishery resources.

Objective 22: Improve public and stakeholder understanding and awareness of fisheries management, current issues, and the Council process.

- Expand existing non-traditional stakeholder outreach efforts (e.g., restaurants, small-scale grocery store owners, and farmers, etc.).
- Continue support of the Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) workshops throughout the U.S. Caribbean.
- Develop island-specific (Puerto Rico, St. Thomas/St. John, St. Croix) outreach approaches and materials for recreational and commercial fishers.

- Expand the role of fisheries liaisons to improve both fisher and public understanding of fisheries issues and the Council process.
- Coordinate with management and science partners to improve the clarity and simplicity of presentations to improve public understanding.
- Partner with other outreach organizations (e.g., PEPCO, Sea Grant) and federal agencies (e.g., USCG, NPS, etc.) and commercial and recreational fishing, diving, and boating organizations to develop and distribute educational materials to fishers, other marine resource users (e.g., divers), and the general public.
- Conduct in-person and/or virtual outreach meetings and workshops to improve fisher and public engagement in the Council process.
- Explore partnerships with organizations to capture traditional ecological knowledge of U.S. Caribbean fishing communities.
- Create an orientation program to inform the fishing community of the roles of the different management partners.
- Develop a mechanism to coordinate development of Council and territorial outreach efforts to ensure consistent messaging on fishery issues and other topics as needed.
- Support the expansion of the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program in the USVI.